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NOTES ON PURITANISM AND THE STAGE

BY THORNTON S. GRAVES

Surely, thinks one who has labored through the thousand pages of Prynne's *Histriomastix*, this voracious Puritan has cited all early English writers who have concerned themselves with the desirability or undesirability of the stage. Recent scholars, however, like Thompson,¹ Cullen,² and Wilson,³ have called attention to various passages bearing upon the controversy which escaped the industry of the zealous Prynne. So widespread was the interest in the fight against the theater and so varied were the authors who expressed themselves on the subject, that not even these later scholars have unearthed in English literature prior to 1642 all the passages written in defence or condemnation of the stage. It is the purpose, therefore, of the first section of this article to present in a more or less haphazard manner a few minor contributions to the struggle between the Puritans and the theater which have not been indicated in the recent discussions of the subject. The passages in question are of minor importance; they add practically nothing to the stock arguments employed during the controversy; they are, nevertheless, I believe, deserving of citation as further evidence of the large number of writers of varied interests and stations in life who involved themselves in the quarrel. A second section will handle, in a more connected manner, a few phases of the controversy subsequent to the closing of the theaters in 1642, and will endeavor to show that the defenders of the stage were not so idle during the years 1642-1660 as is sometimes supposed—that at least some of the credit usually assigned to D'Avenant for keeping alive an interest in the theater during its darkest days in England must be shared with his contemporaries. A final section will present certain evidence to show that the objectors to the stage were by no means silent after the return of Charles II, even if it took a Jeremy Collier

¹ *The Controversy between Puritans and Stage* (1903).

² *Puritanism and the Stage* (Proceedings Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, Vol. XLIII (1911-1912), pp. 153-81).

³ *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, VI, Chap. XIV.

to make the morality of the playhouse a matter of considerable flurry and excitement.

I.

Along with the objections of Babington, Bownd, and numerous other writers on the Sabbath and on questions of morality should be considered the following expressions of opinion regarding Sunday performances. In *The Gallants Burden*, a sermon preached at Paul's Cross during Lent, 1612, Thomas Adams asks if "the Benches in Tauerns, & Theaters" are not "well replenished" when those at Paul's Cross are almost empty (Ed. 1616, p. 9). He also declares, it may be noted in passing, that the epicure is accustomed to visit first the tavern, then the ordinary, next the theater, and finally the stews—"from Wine to Ryot, from that to the Playes and from them to Harlots" (p. 32); and he objects that the theater is the "contemplation" of libertines (p. 33). Francis Rous in his *Oile of Scorpions* (1623) does not specify the playhouse as one of the cardinal vices of his generation, yet he refers with approval to the act forbidding plays on Sunday and obviously holds the actors in contempt, as is indicated by his allusion to "A Player-like Fashionist" (p. 78) and his reference to Cyprian: "When a Player was turned Christian (a farre better change then for a Christian to turne Player) hee would continue his Playing by this reason, because Playing was his maintenance" (p. 71). R. Junius in his *Compleat Armour against Evill Society* (1638) questions: "For, art thou inclined to pray? they will tempt thee to play: wouldest thou goe to a Sermon? by their perswasion the Taverne or Theater stands in the way" (p. 857). In his *The Drunkard's Character*, printed in the same volume with his *Compleat Armour*, he asserts that drunkards go continually from the "taphouse to the play house, where they make a march for the brothel house, and from thence to bed againe: so that they either doe nothing, or that which is worse then nothing" (p. 77). Finally Francis Quarles, like Lodge, Heywood and other friends of the theater, laments in his *Divine Fancies* (1632) that playhouses are open on Sunday (Bk. II, No. 77).

While, strictly speaking, they do not bear any close connection to the stage controversy, a few interesting, though uncomplimentary, allusions to actors may be cited, especially since they do not seem to be generally known. Simon Smel-knave in his *Fearefull and Lamentable Effects of two dangerous Comets* (1590?) predicts:

"Poets and Players shall be Kings by this meanes for the one may lye by authoritie, the other cogge without controle; the one as necessary in a Commonweale, as a candle in a strawbed, the other as famous in idlenes, as dissolute in liuing; blest in their marriages for communitie, holding Aristotles axiome for Authentically: *Bonum quo communius, eo melius*," (p. 11). In his *The Blacke-Year* (1606) Anthony Nixon also makes a prophesy: "Players shal haue libertie to be as famous in pride and idlenes, as they are dissolute in liuing, and as blest in their marriages for communitie, as vnhappy in their choyces for honesty" (Sig. C₃). Richard Middleton in his *Epigrams* (1608) has an epigram "In Histriodanum," in which the actor is represented as whoring and as drinking in his master's cellar during "high time of sermon"—both for his "master's credit." J. H.'s reference to actors in his *This World's Folly* (1615), although it is fairly well known, is worth quoting: "I will not particularize those *Blitea dramata* (as *Laberius* termes another sort) those *Fortune-fatted* fooles, and Times Ideots, whose garbe is the Toothache of witte, the Plague-sore of Judgement, the Common-server of Obscaenities, and the very Traine-powder that dischargeth the roaring *Meg* (not *Mol*) of all scurrile villanies upon the Citie's face; who are faine to produce blinde ⁴ *Impudence*, to personate himself vpon their stage, behung with chaynes of Garlicke, as an Antidote against their owne infectious breaths, lest it should kill their Oyster-crying Audience.⁵ Vos quoque, and you also, who with *Scylla*-barking, *Stentor*-throated bellowing, flash-choaking squibbes of absurd vanities into the nostrils of your spectators; barbarously diuerting *Nature*, and defacing Gods owne image, by metamorphising humane ⁶ shape into bestiall forme" (Sig. B₂). B. N.'s *Strange Newes out of Divers Countries* (1622) contains this statement: "They had moreouer a kind of Rimers, and Ballad penners, which were great proficientes to the Players and Pedlers, which are the fooles of Poets, for they taste little of Poetry more then the last two letters: but for the pot,

⁴ Printed marginal note: "Garlicke." This is a reference to "Garlick's jig" referred to several times in the literature of the period. Cf. also Gosson's objection to the actor who danced naked in a net and *The Distracted Emperor*, v, 4.

⁵ Printed marginal note: "Or, tu quoque."

⁶ Printed marginal note: "*Greenes Baboone*."

they may well challenge that badge, for it is the maintainer of their Muses" (Sig. B₂).

A few passages are worth citing in connection with the familiar argument⁷ that the players were accustomed to "gird at the greatest personages of all estates," as the Epistle to the 1594 edition of *The French Academy* puts it.⁸ In 1611 William Vaughan, who in his *Golden Grove* (1608) had given six reasons why plays are "intolerable in a well governed commonwealth" (Bk. I, Chap. 66) and in his commentary on the first satire of Persius had pointed out that young gentlemen of the Inne of Court waste too much time at stage plays (*ibid.*, Bk., IV, Chap. 34), devoted "Lineament X," of "Circle 3" in his *The Spirit of Detraction* to "Certain Detractions of our common stage-players": "Herein our common *Stage-players* and *Comicke-writers* have as many witnesses as the world hath eyes, that all kind of persons, without respect of sexe or degree are nickt and nipped, rayled and reviled by these snarling curre-dogs. For let a man endeavour to walke uprightly, in the sight of God, separating himselfe as neere as he can from tatling tospots and Tobacconists, loth to sit in the seat of the scornefull and un-righteous, lest he become like will to like, and especially loth to

⁷ Of course the Puritans were not the only persons to make such a complaint. Neither Vaughan nor Melton, for example, whose complaints are cited in the present paper, can hardly be called Puritans. Heywood, too, in his *Apology*, regretted the perversity of the actors in this respect, and Sir William Herbert in *A Prophetie of Cadwallader* (1604) addressed the "Young Prince" in these words:

"Curbe the malignant pride of envies rage,
And checke the stubborne stomackes of disdaine,
These penny Poets of our brazen stage,
Which always wish—O let them wish in vaine!—
With Rossius gate thy government staine.
Make them more mild, or be thou more austere;
Tis vertue unto vice to be severe."

(Collier, *Rarest Books in Eng. Lang.*, II, 121.)

For similar complaints see Gildersleeve, *Gov. Regulation of Eliz. Drama*, *passim*, and Graves in *Anglia* (1914), pp. 137-156.

⁸ Cf. Collier's *Poetical Decameron*, II, 278. Some say that the translator of this work was Thomas Beard; the British Museum Catalogue assigns the translation to Thomas Bowes. Note in this connection that the title-page of the 1586 edition states that the work was translated from French "into English by T. B.," and the dedication to John Barnes is signed "T. B. C."

communicate in the *Eucharist* with such notorious and prophane persons; presently these Ganders gagle, that such a one is an hypocrite, or a peevish puritane. Let a man be silent, putting the barre of discretion before his lips, lest his tongue trippe, and procure hurt, according to that:

Nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum.

No hurt by silence comes; but speech brings hurt:

These muttering Momes paint out, that he is a meacocke, a melancholicke Mummer, or a simple sot. Let an ingenuous scholler salted with experience, seasoned with Christian doctrine, having his heart seared and sealed with zeale and charity, let him but broach forth the barrell of his wit, which *God* hath given him; they crie out that his braine is but an empty barrell, his wit but barren, his matter borrowed out of other mens bookes" (pp. 110-111). John Melton devotes a chapter of his *A sixe-Folde Politician* (1609) to the "Usurping Poets of the title of Pollicie." He asserts that dramatists do not hesitate to satirize individuals and "intermeddle with the 2 edged sworde of the state" (pp. 37 ff.); and he hopes that adequate laws will be made "for the punishing of such scandalous libeling as is, or may be at any time coloured vnder the name of poetising and play-making" (p. 42).

J. H. in *This World's Folly* (1615), during his tirade against the playhouse, pays his respects to the dramatists, "those mercenary *Squitter-wits* mis-called *Poets*" who dip their pens "in the puddle of mischiefe" and "strike at the head of *Nobility, Authority* and *high-seated greatnesse*." (Sig. B₃).

Not very well known are a few passages which, like those by Northbrooke, Gosson and Richard Brathwaite, point out the peculiar danger of the theater to women. William Averell, student in divinity and schoolmaster in London, exclaims on several occasions in his *A Dyall for Dainty Darlings* (1584) against the sins of the girls of his time. Especially interesting is his reference to the "gadding girles," who laugh, dance, paint, wander to weddings, "thrust in at Theaters & Trip to Taverns." William Vaughan in *The Spirit of Detraction* (1615) explains that women frequently lose their reputation on account of their donning gaudy costumes and attending "stage playes" and public dances "upon Sundayes and Holydayes" (p. 345). A passage from Robert An-

ton's rare "*Vices Anotimie Scourged and Corrected* (1617) is worth quoting at some length:

"Why doe our *lustfull* Theaters entice,
 And personate in liuely action *vice*;
 Draw to the *Cities* shame, with *gilded Clothes*,
 Such *Swarmes* of wiues to breake their *nuptiall othes*:
 Or why are *women* rather growne so mad,
 That their *immodest feete* like *planets* gad
 With such *irregular motion* to base *Playes*,
 Where all the *deadly sinnes* keepe *hollidaies*.
 There shall they see the *vices* of the times,
Orestes incest, *Cleopatres* crimes,
Lucullus surfets, and *Poppeas* pride.
Virginears rape, and wanton *Lais* hide
 Her *sirens charmes* in such *eare-charming sense*;
 As it would turne a modest *audience*,
 To *brazen-fac'et* profession of a *whore*.
 Their *histories* perswade, but *action* more,
Vices well coucht in pleasing *Scenanes* present,
 More *will* to act, there *action* can inuent.
 And this the reason, unless *heauen preuent*,
 Why *women* most at *Playes* turne impudent,

.
 But I could wish their *Modestie* confin'd,
 To a more *ciuill* and *graue libertie*,
 Of *will* and *frece* election: carefullie
 Hating this *hellish confluence* of the *stage*,
 That breeds more grosse *infections* to the *age*
 Of *separations*, and religious *bonds*,
 Than e're *relegion*, with her *hallowed hands*
 Can reunite" (pp. 46-47).

Before citing various passages commendatory of the theater, it will be well to refer to a few miscellaneous objections to the playhouse, objections which have apparently escaped Thompson and other students of the stage controversy. Dudley Fenner in *A Short and Profitable Treatise of Lawfull and Unlawfull Recreations* (1587), excluded plays from lawful recreations, because they violate I Peter, i., 14, where men are forbidden to "take up the outward fasion" of evil men. Lodge in his *Wits Miserie and the Worlds Madnesse Discovering the Deuils Incarnate of this Age* (1596), while he approves harmless drama, is vigorous in his denunciation of scurrility in the playhouse, advising the actors to write the following over their theaters:

"*Nil dictu foedum visuque, hæc limina tangat.*

Let noght vnfit to see or to be said,

Be toucht, or in these houses be bewraid" (p. 40).

Crosse's *Vertues Common-wealth* (1603) contains numerous objections to the stage; J. H.'s *This Worlds Folly*, quotations from which have already been given, has a three-page denunciation of the theater, which concludes with the wish that the hand of authority may tear off the "Menstruous Ragges," [i. e., the "Bawdy Players," as a marginal note explains] from "the Citie's Skirts, which so besoyle and coinquinate her whole vesture." Thomas Freeman in *Rubbe and a Great Cast* (1614) and Sir John Harington at the conclusion of *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* resent the prayer uttered at the end of plays by actors whose lips have just been prophaned with "Scurrile Jeasts"; Brathwaite in his *Survey of History* (1638) refers to the "mercenary actors" who "spurt out some obscene jeast to make a prophane Rogue applaud him" (p. 240); and Francis Lenton in *The Young Gallants Whirligig* (1629) has an interesting passage in which he declares that plays are the "Nurseries of Vice,"

"Which draw more youth unto the damned cell

Of furious Lust, then all the Devill could doe

Since he obtained his first overthrow."

And finally, it may be mentioned at this point that John Owen in his *Conduct of the Stage Consider'd* (1721) cites "Dr. Taylor, the famous Preacher of Aldermany"—that is, Thomas Taylor, who died in 1633—along with Beard as opposing "Plays and Comedies and such like May-Games" (p. 27). Somewhat earlier the author of *The Stage Condemn'd* (1698) quotes a passage (p. 95) against stage-plays from Matthew Parker's *De Antiquitate Ecclesiae Britannicae*, and asserts (p. 97) that "Doctor Griffith, Doctor Williams, Doctor Elton and Mr. Don on the seventh commandment" all condemn stage-plays, as does Dr. Layton in his *Speculum Belli Sacri*.

A few statements commendatory of the theater are worth considering in connection with such elaborate defenses as those of Lodge and Haywood. In *The Praise of Musicke* (1586) Dr. John Case (?), while discussing the "particular use" of music at marriages, feasts, and similar occasions, writes as follows (pp. 80-81): "For I dare not speake of dauncing or theatrall spectacles, least I pull whole swarmes of enimies upon me. Albeit Lexbonax of My-

tilen, honestus plane vir & bonus, a man I am sure, aswell titled, as the curiously minded called dauncers . . . men teaching wisdom even with their hands, and often went to theaters, giuing this testimony of them, that he euer returnd home the better by them. I confesse I am accessory to their iniurie against musick in bereauing it or these two so ample & notable prouinces, because I doe not by open resistance hinder their riot. For howsoever obscenity may bring the stage in suspicion of unchastnes and incontinency, make dauncing disfaurable and odious, I am sure that neither of them keeping themselves under saile, that is not ouerreaching their honest and lawfull circumstances, can want either good groundes to authorize them, or sufficient patronage to maintaine them." Joseph Wybarne in *The New Age of Old Names* (1609), while he disapproves of cock-fighting and the baiting of animals (Section IV), is very practical in his attitude toward the playhouse (pp. 52-54). "The Abuse of sundry Theaters," he writes, "here seemes to present it selfe, which were they reduced to their first institution, might heale as much as they now hurt." After discussing certain features of the ancient theater, he says: "Notwithstanding, if we marke how young men spend the latter end of the day in gaming, drinking, whoring, it were better to tolerate playes with *Augustus, Vespasian, Titus, Nerva, Traian*, and other good Emperours, then with *Domitian* to cut downe the vines, least tillage be neglected . . . For it is a Principle in Policie, that the deteining of the multitude by publicke spectacles, is a great obstacle to many base and clandestine Actions . . . so I feare if all publicke sports were restrained, our Country would soone turne to sottishnesse or mutineys." No. 207 of John Owen's Epigrams (translation of Thomas Harvey) declares that preachers and players

"check our crimes; with Teares
The Preachers, and the Players with Jeers."

No. XX of Owen Feltham's *Resolves* (1628) compares preachers and players. Whereas he laments the "obscene scurrilities" which the stage sometimes presents, he is very complimentary in his references to actors and the drama, asserting that "the weighty lines men find upon the stage, I am persuaded, have been the lures to draw away the Pulpits followers." Ralph Knevet in an interesting epistle to the Society of Florists, prefixed to his *Rhodon and Iris*, a pastoral "presented at the Florists Feast in Norwich, May 3,

1631," writes that he has been accused by the "malicious discretion" of the overly devout of satirizing private persons in his play. For such enemies of the drama he has little respect:

"But some there be that are so pure and sage,
That they doe utterly abhorre a Stage,
Because they would be still accounted holy,
And know, the Stage doth oft bewray their folly.
You could but wonder to see what distaste
They tooke, to see an Hypocrite uncas'd:
Oh had they power, they would the Author use
As ill as *Bacchus* Priests did *Orpheus*."

II

Thompson's statement⁹ that "with the year 1642 ends the Puritan attack on the stage" is of course essentially correct; yet it should not be forgotten that pamphleteers frequently "rubbed it in" on the players¹⁰ during the period when the theaters were closed, and that at least one minister felt called upon to print three sermons against the evils of stage plays—a violent denunciation printed at Oxford in 1653 with the following title-page:

"Tragi-Comaedia, Being a Brief Relation of the Strange, and Wonderfull hand of God discovered at Witney, in the *Comedy* Acted there *February* the third, where there were some *Slaine*, many *Hurt*, with severall other *Remarkable* Passages. Together with what was Preached in three Sermons on that occasion from *Rom.* 1. 18. Both which May serve as some Check to the growing Atheisme of the Present Age. By John Rowe of C. C. C. in Oxford, Lecturer in the Towne of Witney." The sermons themselves are of little interest, but preceding them are a four-page preface, in which the author urges the people of Witney not to "quarrell with the Almighty" for selecting their town "as the publick Thea-

⁹ *Controversy between Puritans and Stage*, p. 186.

¹⁰ Cf., for example, *Pigges Corantoe or Newes from the North* (1642), where the writer states that "pimps, players & panders are absolutely broke," and intend to be honest during the war. The same tract asserts that it is reported that the preparation for war on the part of the Cavaliers is merely jest, since "all players stay behind, and instead of Souldiers there go babes and sucklings." In the same year *The Scots Scouts Discoveries* remarks that in London he met many gamblers and "some players and Poets, but all out of employment."

ter whereon he would manifest his holynesse," and "A Brief Narrative of The Play Acted at Witney the third of February 1652." Rowe's work is fairly well known to students of the stage, but his "Briefe Narrative" is so interesting in itself and throws so much light upon human nature and the early manner of presenting certain theatricals, as well as upon the native English fondness for drama which survived in spite of Cromwell and his legislation, that I am emboldened to reprint it here from the copy in the British Museum, in spite of certain rules about unity and proportion:

"It may not seem so proper, nor be so pleasing to every Reader, to set down all the Circumstances about this *Play*, forasmuch that somewhat might be said touching the rise and originall of it, the nature of the *Play* it self, and the book from whence it was taken, the motives, grounds, and ends of the Actors, concerning all which I might speak more then here shall be inserted, having taken some paines to satisfie my selfe in those particulars. But I thought it meet to insist on those things, which did most discover the hand of God in so eminent and remarkable a Providence, and lightly touch on other things, so far as they may give light to that which is the name. This *Play* was an old *Play*, and had been Acted by some of *Santon-Harcourt* men many years since. The title of it is, *A most pleasant Comedy of Mucedorus the Kings Sonne of Valentia, and Amadine the Kings Daughter of Aragon: with the merry conceits of Mouse, &c.* The Actors of the *Play* were Countrey-men; most of them, and for any thing I can heare, all of *Stanton-Harcourt* Parish. The punctuall time of their first Learning the *Play*, cannot be certainly set downe; but this we have been told, they had been learning it ever since *Michaelmas*, and had been Acting privately every week. This we are informed upon more certain grounds, that they began to Act it in a more publike manner about *Christmas*, and Acted it three or foure times in their own Parish, they Acted it likewise in severall neighbowring Parishes, as *Moore, Stanlake, South-Leigh, Cumner*. The last place that they came at was *Witny*, where it pleased the Lord to discover his displeasure, against such wicked and ungodly *Playes* by an eminent hand. Some few days before the *Play* was to be Acted, one of *Stanton* came to the *Baylife* of *Witney* telling him that there were some Countrey men that had learn'd to make a *Play*, and desired his Leave to shew it, his aime

being (as the *Baylife* conceiv'd) that they might have the Liberty of the *Towne-Hall*. Leave also was desired of the other *Baylife*, but they being denied by both the *Bayliffs*, they pitched on the *White Hart*, a chiefe inne of the Towne to Act their *Play* there. The day when it was Acted, was the third of *February*, the same day when many Godly people, Townesmen and Schollars of *Oxford*, kept a Solemne Day of *Fast* at *Carfax*. About seaven a Clock at Night they caused a Drum to beat, and a Trumpet to be sounded to gather the People together. The people flocked in great multitudes, Men, Women, and Children, to the number (as is guess'd) of three Hundred, some say foure hundred, and the Chamber where the *Play* was acted being full, others in the Yard pressed sorely to get in. The people which were in the Roome were exceeding Joviall, and merry before the *Play* began, Young men and Maides dancing together, and so merry and frolick were many of the Spectators, that the Players could hardly get Liberty that they themselves might Act, but at last a little Liberty being obtained, the *Play* it self began. In the beginning of it Enters a Person that took the name of *Comedie*, and speaks as follows.

*Why so thue doe I hope to please;
Musick revives, and Mirth is tolerable.
Comedie play thy part, and please:
Make merry them that come to joy with thee.*

With two or three verses more.

Upon this enters *Envy*, another person, & speaks as follows:

*Nay stay Minion stay there lyes a block;
What all on Mirth? I'll interrupt your tale,
And mix your Musick with a Tragick end.*

Upon which *Comedie* replies. *Envy* makes answer againe in severall verses, and among the rest these:

*Hearken thou shalt heare noyse
Shall fill the ayre with shrilling sound,
And thunder Musick to the Gods above.*

Three verses after it followes,

*In this brave Musick Envy takes delight
Where I may see them wallow in their bloud,
To spurne at Armes & Leggs quite shivered off,
And heare the cryes of many thousand slaine.*

After this *Comedie* speaks, *Envy* replies

*Trebble death shall crosse thee with dispiht,
And make thee mourn where most thou joyest,
Turning thy mirth into a deadly dole,
Whirling thy pleasurs with a peale of death,
And drench thy methods in a Sea of bloud.*

Which passages, if the Reader carry along with him, he will see how farre they were made good by the Divine hand, both on the Actors and Spectators. The matter of the *Play* is scurrilous, impious, blasphemous in severall passages. One passage of it hath such a bitter Taunt against all *Godly persons* under the name *Puritans*, and at *Religion* it selfe, under the phrase of *observing Fasting days*, that it may not be omitted, it was almost in the beginning of the *Play*, and they were some of the Clownes words when he first began to Act, *Well Ile see my Father hang'd before Ile serve his Horse any more, well Ile carry home my bottle of Hay and for once make my Fathers Horse turne Puritan, and observe Fasting dayes, for he gets not a bitt.* How remarkable was this that some of them that were called *Puritans* in the dayes of old, had spent that very day in *Oxford* in Fasting, and Prayer; and that the Lord by so eminent an hand should testifie against such, who were not only scoffers at *Godly persons*, but at *Religion* it selfe. Another passage was of so horrid an aspect, as that the Actor who was to speak it durst not vent it without a change. The verses as they are Printed are these.

*Ah, Breemo, Breemo, what a foyle hadst thou,
that yet at no time was afraid
To dare the greatest Gods to fight with thee*

At the end of which verses it followeth, *He strikes*: and probable enough it is, that he used some action at that time; but the words were so gastly, and had such a face of impiety in them, that he durst not say *Gods*, but (as one that excused him would have us believe) he said *Gobs*. And indeed so insolent were these, and other expressions in the *Play*, that some of the Spectators thought they were not fit to be used, and when they heard them, wished themselves out of the roome. We might instance in some other passages, but there hath been enough already. The modest, and ingenuous reader would blush to read some passages. Thus had they continued their sport for an hour, and halfe, as some of the Spectators say,

but as is more probable, about two houres, for they were ordinarily three houres in acting it (as the Players say) and there were above two parts in three of the play that were passed over in this Action. At which time it pleased God to put a stop to their mirth, and by an immediate hand of his owne, in causing the chamber to sink, and fall under them, to put an end to this ungodly Play before it was thought, or intended by them.

The Actors who were now in action were *Bremo a wild Man*, (courting, and solliciting his Lady, and among other things, begging a *Kiss* in this verse.

Come Kisse me (Sweet) for all my favours past)

And *Amadine* the Kings daughter (as named in the Play) but in truth a young man attired in a womans Habit. The words which were then Speaking, were these, the words of *Bremo* to his Lady

*Thou shalt be fed with Quailes and Partridges,
With Black-birds, Larkes, Thrushes, and Nightingales.*

Various reports there have been concerning the words spoken at that time, as that it should be sayed, *the Devill was now come to act his part*: some of the People might say so, observing the *wild mans* carriage, and some other passages that went before, where there was mention made of the Divell in a Bares dublet, the *wild man* then acting the *Bares* part: and indeed we have it upon good information that there were such words spoken; only they were the *spectators* words, and not the *Actors*: but this we are assured of, the words then spoken by the *Actors* were those above mentioned, as *he himselfe* acknowledged, and we find them printed so in the Book.

The *Place* wherein the *Play* was acted, was not a *Stage* erected on purpose, but a *Chamber* belonging to the *Inne*, a large *Chamber*, and which sometimes had been a *Malting roome*, having a part of it covered with earth to that purpose. It had two Beames to support it, of which one *Sc*; the shorter was a great, *soūd* & substantiall one, & lay between the two side walls; the other had one end shooting into the middle of the shorter beame, and the other end of it fastned in the wall, of which you may see a description.

[A rough sketch in original is omitted.]

The fall was not very quick, but somewhat slow, & gentle, in so much that soe that were present thought it was a part of the play,

(but it proved the saddest part) & expected whē they should be taken up again, yet was it not so slowe as that they were able to recover themselves, for the actors then in action fell down, and a great number of people with them into the under roome, which was a *Shuffle-board-roome*, and the table its selfe broken in peeces by the fall of the Timber. The Chamber did not fall down quite, but lay somewhat pendulous, and hanging, broad at the top, and narrowe at the bottome, that end of the long beame, which lay in the short falling down, the other end not falling, & the ends of the short Beame where it brake hanging down, the bottome where the people lay was of a very narrow compasse, the people falling as it were into a Pit; & such were the apprehensions of some of the Spectators, seeing the Chamber sink in that manner as if the *Earth was opening, and swallowing them up*. After the Crack of the beame which was exceeding great, and the fall of the Chamber (in the manner as is before described) all was quiet, and still, and a kind of silence for a pretty space of time, the people being astonied, and bereft of their senses. One that was present was so much affrighted (as was said) that she thought her selfe verily to be in Hell, which we do the rather insert because whoever shall put the circumstances together may well say it was a little resemblance of that black, and dismall place, there being so many taken in the midst of their sinfull practices, and thrust into a pit together where they were left in darkness, the *Lights* being put out by the fall, where the dust that was raised made a kind of Mist and Smoake, where there were the most lamentable skreekes, and outcries, that may be imagined; where they were shut up as in a prison, and could not get themselves out, (the doore of the under roome being blocked up, and their leg's being so pinioned, & wedged together by faggots, and other things, that fell down together with them from the upper roome, that they could not stirre to help themselves). Another (as is said) suposing his limbs to be all plucked asunder cryed out, *that they should cut off his head*: this is certaine, the fright was exceeding great, and many were dead for a time that afterward came to themselves. When the people were come to themselves, there was a fearfull, and most lamentable cry. sōe crying one thing, sōe another, some crying *aid for the Lords sake*, others crying *Lord have mercy on us*, *Christ have mercy on us*, others cryed out oh my Husband! a second, or my Wife! a third Oh my child!

and another said, No body loves *me* so well as to see where my child is. Others cryed out for Ladders, and Hatchets to make their passage out, for the chamber falling, the doore of the under roome was so Blocked up that they could not get out there, so that they were fain to break the barres of the window, and most of the people got out that way though it were a good space of time before they could get forth. The other Players that were not in action were in the Attiring-roome which was joyning to the Chamber that fell, and they helped to save some of the people which were neer that part. Those of the people that fell not down, but were preserved by that meanes got out at the window of the upper roome. There were five slaine outright, whereof three were Boys, two of which being about seaven, or eight years old or thereabout; the other neer twelve; the other two were Girls, the elder of which being fourteen, or fiveteen, and the younger twelve, or thirteen yeares old. A woman also had her legg sorely broken that the surgeons were forced to cut it off, and she dyed within three or foure dayes after it was cut off. Many were hurt, and sorely bruised, to the number of about threescore, that we have certain information of, besides those that conceale their greifes, and some of the Contry of which there were diverse present, it being market day when the Play was acted.

The Surgeon that dressed the wounded people, told me that the next day after this was done he was counting with himselfe how many he had dressed, and as neere as he could reckon he had dressed about fortie five, and twelve after that as he had supposed, and two or three after he had cut off the womans legg. Which therefore I thought good to insert that the reader may know upon what grounds he may take this relation.

Some others were dressed by others in the town the just number of which I have not learn't. But it is generally conceived that there were divers did receive hurt which would not suffer it to be knowen. Among those that were hurt there were about a dozen broken armes, and leggs, and some two or three dislocations, as we were likewise informed by the Surgeon. Some of the people came out with bloody faces, neither could it be otherwise, they having trod one upon another in a most sad, and lamentable manner. Certain it is there was much hurt done that way; the children that were killed, being stifled as was supposed. The man in womans

apparrell lay panting for breath, and had it not been for *Bremo* his fellow Actor, he had been stifled; but *Bremo* having recovered himselfe a little, bare up the others head with his arme, whereby he got some breath, and so was preserved; but both the one, and the other were hurt; *Bremo* being so sorely bruised, as that he was fain to keep his bed for two dayes after, and the Lady had her beauty mar'd, her face being swoln by the hurt taken in the fall. Some had their mouths so stuf'd with dust that they could hardly speak, the people that came from the house made a pittifull moane, some going in the streets and complaining, here is a Play, a sad Play indeed, others crying out to them that met them, (as they are wont that have received some deadly wound) oh I am kil'd! Some cryed out that their armes were broken, others that their Leggs were broken, some cursed the Players that ever they came to *Witny*, and the players themselves wished that they had never come thither. They that received no hurt were exceedingly affrighted, insomuch that one of them that were present, as I am credibly informed, did say, that he would not, for as much as *Witny* was worth, be in the like affright again, though he were sure he should have no hurt. Others said that they would never goe to a play more, and that it was a judgment. Others have been so prophane, as we hear, to make a laughing-stock of it, and some so desperate, as to say, they would go againe, if it were tomorrow next; and too many apt to say it was but a chance, a misfortune, the beame was weak, there were so many load of people there, and the like. But how sleight so ever the matter was made afterwards, sure enough it is, it was sad enough then. It was one of the saddest, and blackest nights that ever came on *Witny*. Sad it was to see Parents carry home their Children dead in their armes, sad it was to see so many bruised, hurt, and maimed, and some, as it were, halfe dead that were not able to help themselves, but were fain to be carryed away by their friends, some on their backs, some on chaires, sad it was to hear the piteous cryes of those that were not there bemoaning their distressed friends. This was the sad end of this ungodly play. And what was spoken in jest in the beginning of it, by the just hand of God, was made good in earnest. The Comedy being turned into a Tragedy, it had a sad *Catastrophe*, ending with the deaths of some, and hurts of many. And as it was said before

And make thee mourn where most thou joy'st

So by the just hand of God came it to passe. For in the midst of their mirth, and jollity did this fall out, in the midst of these amorous passages between *Bremo*, and his Lady was this stroke given; yea, immediately before they expected the greatest pleasure, and contentment. For the Actors said the best of the play was still behind, and a little after the hearts, and fancies of the Spectators were to be filled with love-complements between *Mucedorus*, and his *Amadine*. So true was that

Turning thy mirth into a deadly Dole.

The Lord from heaven, having given a check to such wanton sports, teaching men what they must look for, and that he will not bear with such grosse open profaness in such an age of light as this is. That he will so farre take notice of the Atheisme, and profaneness of men in this world, as shall keep the world in order, though he hath reserved the great, and full recompence for another day, and place."

Thompson, after discussing the closing of the theaters in 1642, remarks (p. 184) that it "must not be supposed, however, that play lovers were to give up their amusement, and authors their livelihood, without protest"; but in what follows this remark he does not stress sufficiently the efforts made by the champions of the drama to keep alive an interest in the theater, and their persistent endeavor to arouse popular sentiment against the narrowness and oppression of Cromwell's party.

This opposition to Puritan dominance assumed various forms. On several occasions the actors petitioned Parliament for permission to perform.¹¹ In spite of repeated Puritan legislation, they gave their entertainments more frequently than is usually supposed.¹² Playwrights continued to produce dramas, some of them

¹¹ Cf. the satirical poem *The Players Petition* (1643), *The Actors Remonstrance* (1643), *Certaine Propositions* (Hazlitt, *Drama and Stage*, Introd., p. xi), the petition of ca. 1650, by "diverse poor and distressed men" (Gildersleeve, *Gov. Regulation*, pp. 227-28).

¹² On subject of plays acted during Commonwealth see Gildersleeve, *Gov. Regulation*, pp. 215 ff.; Collier *Annals* (ed. 1831), II, 106-119; Ward, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, III, 277 ff.; *Biographia Dramatica* (1812), *passim*; Adams, *Shaks. Playhouses*, pp. 290, 291, 304-6, 363, 366; Doran, *Their Majesties Servants* (1864), I, 580. Several performances not mentioned in the works above are referred to in the following pages of the present paper.

for reasons other than a love for art. Old plays were reprinted with amazing rapidity, some of them, as we shall see later, for a very good reason. Champions of the drama lost no opportunity, apparently, of commending their favorite pastime and ridiculing those who had closed the playhouses. D'Avenant's work in behalf of the theater is too well known for discussion here. The usual attitude toward his efforts is fairly well expressed in Thomas Pecke's *Parnassi Puerperium* (1659):

"That Ben, whose Head, deserv'd the Roscian Bayes;
Was the first gave the Name of Works, to Playes.
You his Corrivall, in this Waspish Age;
Are more than *Atlas*, to the fainting stage.
Your *Bonus Genius*, you this way display;
And to delight us, is your Opera."

Deserving of citation along with D'Avenant in this connection is Richard Flecknoe, who, writing of himself in the preface to his *Erminia* (1661), asserted that the author "may say without vanity that none knows more of the English Stage than he, nor any seen more of the Latine, French, Spanish and Italian." Such conceit naturally aroused the hostility of his contemporaries; and in consequence of the ridicule of Dryden, Flecknoe's significance in the history of the drama has not been sufficiently emphasized by modern scholars. Perhaps envious of the work of D'Avenant, Flecknoe may have believed that credit due himself for his labors in the cause of drama had been given to a man whose work he himself had anticipated. As the following facts will reveal, Flecknoe probably had some ground for such a belief.

In the first place, he was apparently well received in influential circles; and we may be sure that he never lost an opportunity to speak well about a subject concerning which he confessed knowing as much as any other living person. Again, in his extremely sensible "Discourse on Languages," printed in *Miscellania* (1653), he argues with great force that the English language has been greatly enriched by means of the stage, "the mint that daily coynes new words." The suppressing of the theaters, he argues, will "not only *retard* the perfectioning of our Language towards which it was advancing amain, but even quite hinder and *recoyle* it, and make it return to its former Barbarisme"; and in defending the stage he makes the interesting claim that "the Gentry of our

Nation were as much civiliz'd by the Stage, as either by *Travail*, or the *University*, in beholding the abridgment there of the best Fashions, Language, and Behaviour of the Time." In the same work he printed *A Whimzey written from beyond Seas, about the end of the year, 52*, a light and humorous work which nevertheless is a rather effective protest against the Puritan bigotry which closed the Blackfriars Theater.

Flecknoe did more than write passages such as those above. Like D'Avenant, he undertook the bringing about the actual performance of his works. In 1654 was printed his *Loves Dominion*, a dramatic piece submitted as a pattern for the "reformed Stage." In his "Preface to the Reader," he laments the depths to which drama has fallen, but emphasizes the value of the stage and points out that the pulpit should be reformed no less than the theater. It is significant that he dedicates his play to Lady Elizabeth Claypole, Cromwell's favorite daughter, who frequently interceded with her father in behalf of persons of another party. And she was apparently liberal minded in other respects, for in 1650 Cromwell wrote that he was afraid of her "being cozened with worldly vanities and worldly company, which I doubt she is subject to." To this most likely agent in advancing his cause Flecknoe writes as follows: "For the rest, I dare not Interest you in its more publique Representation, not knowing how the palat of the Time may relish such Things yet, which, till it was disgusted with them, was formerly numbered amongst its Chiefest Dainties, and is so much longed for still, by all the nobler and better sort, as could it but be effected by your meditation, you should infinitely oblige them all." Whether this plea was to any extent successful I do not know, but in view of certain statements that Flecknoe later makes it possibly was.¹³ In this connection should also be mentioned Flecknoe's *The Marriage of Oceanus and Britannia*, an "Allegorical Fiction, really declaring England's riches, glory, and puissance by sea. To be represented in music, dances, and proper scenes" (1659).¹⁴ I have not been able to consult a copy of this production, which seems to be similar to the "operas" of D'Avenant

¹³ The play had been written as early as 1650, in which year it was acted at Bersell, near Brussels, under the title of *Loves Kingdome* (cf. Collier, *Rarest Books in English Language*, II, 24).

¹⁴ Cf. *Biog. Dramatica* (1812), III, 22.

and which may possibly have been acted some time before its publication.

Flecknoe's statement that the presentation of plays is being "much longed for still by all the nobler and better sort" is a very significant one. It is also significant that some of "the better and nobler sort" did not hesitate to express in one way or another their attitude toward the stage. James Shirley, who no doubt felt that by so doing he was contributing his bit to the cause, published in 1653 "six new plays"; and in the well known preface to the 1647 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher paid a beautiful tribute to the drama. Dr. Richard Whitlock in *ZWOTOMIA* (1654) has an essay titled "Profane Inspirations Plea or Poetry's Preheminence," in which he declares that whereas he has no desire to enter the "Lists with any *Histrionmastix* to maintain the *Stages Quarrell*," he is sure that the "Dramatick part of Poetry" is inferior to none for usefulness. "Nor is it such a *Paradox* as it may seem," he continues, "to sound to some half-witted Eares; for I dare aver what hath been writ for the *Stage* (*ancient*, or *modern*) is not inferior to any writings on the same *Theme* (excepting the *Advantages of Christianity*, and our better *Schoolmaster for Heaven*) of never so *severe* an *Authority*" (pp. 472-73). In 1655 Sir Ralph Freeman reprinted his youthful *Imperiale*, primarily, he says, to anticipate a surreptitious copy; but it is significant that in the preface he quotes several passages from Aristotle, Plutarch, and others, in favor of dramas, introducing them with the remark: "And therefore to manifest how Antiquity hath valu'd this kinde of Argument, I have prefixed some testimonies, that the rigid men of our age, who will be ready to say, I have been to idly busi'd, may see what use the Graccians and Romans made of Tragaedy to prevaile upon the affections of the people." As is well known, the debate between Diogenes and Aristophanes in D'Avenant's *The First Dayes Entertainment at Rutland House* (1656) is a plea for the stage, for "publick Entertainments" and "Moral Representations," while the epilogue is a hint to the audience to insist upon such performances. F. Cole in his commendatory poem prefixed to George Gerbier D'Ouvilly's *The False Favourite Disgrac'd* (1657) begins:

"Dramatick Poems, though the *zealous Age*
Will not permit them to *Adorn the Stage*)

Are without doubt of greater Excellence
 Then *they* suppose, who *want* both Wit and Sense.
 They are the Crowne of Vertue, Scourge of sin;
 Some scape a Sermon, whom a Play might win.
 Crimes of *pridigious* bulk and *purple dye*,
 Are here *dissected* and expos'd to th' eye;
 To make them *hated* too, as well as *known*
 Few will a *Branded Malefactor* own."

In the same year James Howell in his *Londinopolis*, after referring to the time when "there were more theaters in London than any where else," writes pretty much as Flecknoe had written several years before: "And it was a true observation, that those comical, and tragical Histories, did much improve, and enrich the *English* Language, they taught young men witty Complements, and how to carry their Bodies in a handsome posture: Add hereunto that they instructed them in the stories of divers things, which being so lively represented to the eye, made firmer impression in the memory. Lastly, They reclaimed many from Vice and Vanity; for though a Comedy be never so wanton, yet it ends with vertue, and the punishment of vice."

In 1658, William Cartwright, whose four dramas had been printed in the 1651 edition of his works, published Heywood's *Apology* under the title *An Actor's Vindication*. In the same year Leonard Willan prefixed to his *Orgula, or the Fatal Error* his very pedantic and philosophical "*Preface*, discovering the true nature of *Poesie*, with the proper Use and Intention of such publique Divertisements." Plays, he argues, should be encouraged because they teach good morals and manners, enlighten and amuse the unlearned multitude, give the spectators brought together an opportunity to improve themselves by intercourse with their fellows, and afford an excellent means of instructing youth. This last advantage, he adds, is one that has been generally recognized by numerous seminaries, societies, and schools on the Continent.

If the friends of the stage did not hesitate to express themselves on the virtues of drama, they showed even less hesitancy in expressing themselves regarding the enemies of drama. *A Key to the Cabinet of the Parliament* (1648) contains a rather vicious gibe at the fanatics who closed the theaters;¹⁵ the interesting "Prologue to the Gentry," which accompanies the daring *Famous Tragedy of*

¹⁵ Cf. Collier, *Annals of Stage* (1831), II, 107 note.

King Charles I (1649) is as outspoken as the drama itself in denouncing "the monsters of the times" who razed the playhouses and who "lap bloud as milke and glory"; J. S., in the address to the reader prefixed to his *Prince of Priggs Revels* (1651) states¹⁶ that the works of "incomparable Johnson, excellent Shakespear, and elegant Fletcher" aim always to magnify virtue and "depress vice," however vituperated they may be by "some streight-laced brethren not capable of their sublimity." In their poems prefixed to "Five New Playes" by Richard Brome (1653), Ashton Cockayne and Alexander Brome lash the "precise ignorance" of the time and predict a speedy return to reason, when authority will recognize that

"to the being of a happy State,
Pleasure and Profit must Incorporate."

In the dedication of his *Extravagant Shepherd* (1654) to Mrs. Joanna Thornhill, T. R. writes: "Such is his Innocency that in this habit he might, without Gaule to the Spectators, have enter'd the Theater (had not the Guilty Ones of this Age, broken that Mirrour lest they should there behold their own horrible Shapes represented)." And finally, William Chamberlayne published his *Loves Victory* (1658) to be read while "the mourning Stage was silent" and inveighs against an ignorant age when

"in a cell
The scholar stews his catholic brains for food."¹⁷

There is abundant evidence to show that the dramatic form was frequently employed as a means of justifying "the good old cause" and satirizing those who had put down the playhouses. It is possible, for example, that T. B.'s *The Rebellion of Naples*, published in the eventful year 1649, was intended to convey a definite lesson to the England of the time, in spite of his statement in the preface that, contrary to what many will believe, he has no intention of meddling with "notable and remarkable passages of State." It is possible, too, that *The Hectors, or the False Challenge* (1656) was intended to throw light on persons of the time other than the hectors. And finally, it is entirely possible that Leonard Willan's

¹⁶ J. S., it should be pointed out, is no more complimentary to the actors than he is to the Puritans.

¹⁷ Cf. Ward, *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, III, 289.

Orgula was published in 1658, not only for its preface justifying the drama, but also because it contains a vivid presentation of the crimes of the Lord Protector Sinevero, a presentation which would at least suggest to the reader the career of Cromwell.

We are on safer ground in dealing with other plays and "dramatic tracts" of the time. Cosmo Manuche's *The Loyal Lovers* (1652), although the scene is laid in Amsterdam, is an obvious glorification of the Royalists and a satire of Hugh Peters and his sort. About ¹⁸ 1647 Robert Baron composed his *Mirza. A Tragedie Really acted in Persia, in the last Age*. Genest remarks ¹⁹ that Allegbeg is perhaps Cromwell. That the drama was regarded as one touching upon the politics of the day is proved by Henry Bold's poem ²⁰ "to R. B. Esq., having read his *Mirza*," which begins:

"Thy scene was *Persia*, but too like our own,
Only our *Soffie* has not got the *Crown*."

An extremely bitter satire against Cromwell, Hugh Peters, and other members of their party is the drama with the following self-explanatory title-page ²¹: "The Famous Tragedy of King Charles I.

Basely Butchered by those who are,

Omne nefas proni patare pudorisinanes
Crudeles, violenti, Importunique, tyranni
Mendaces, falsi, perversi, per fidiosi
Faedifragi, falsis verbis infunda loquentes.

In Which is Included, The severall Combinations and machinations that brought that incomparable Prince to the Block, the over-

¹⁸ The dedication to the king would seem to indicate that the play was printed not later than 1648. The copy of the play in the Library of Congress has "1647" written on the title-page as the date of publication. But note in this connection that in Moseley's catalogue of books appended to the play James Howell's *A German Diet*, Thomas Blunt's *Academy of Eloquence*, and Richard Whitlock's *ZWOTOMIA* are listed among the books printed "this Terme for me." Howell's work was printed in 1653, Blunt's in 1653 or early in 1654, Whitlock's in 1654. Among the "Bookes I do purpose to print very speedily" are Thomas Washburne's *Divine Poems* (1654) and Howell's *Parthenopoeia*, the second part of which is to be carried down "to these present Times 1654."

¹⁹ *Some Account of Eng. Stage*, x, 121.

²⁰ *Poems* (Ed. 1664), p. 196.

²¹ Quoted from copy of work in Malone Collection in Bodleian Library.

tures hapning at the famous Siege of *Colchester*, the Tragical falls of Sir *Charles Lucas* and Sir *George Lisle*, the just reward of the Leveller *Rainsborough*, *Hamilton* and *Bailies* Treacheries, In delivering the late *Scottish* Army into the hands of *Cromwell*, and the designe the Rebels have to destroy the Royal Posterity. Printed in the Yeare 1649." Equally bold in its denunciation is Samuel Sheppard's *The Committee Man Curried* (1647), a comedy "presented to the view of all men" and "discovering the corruption of Committee-men and Excise-men, the unjust sufferings of the Royall Party, the divellish hypocrisie of some Round-heads, the revolt for gaine of some Ministers." *The Levellers Levell'd, or The Independents' Consipracy to root out Monarchy* (1647), by Mercurius Pragmaticus (i. e., Marchmont Nedham) is an open satire of Hugh Peters and his faction.²² Similar to Nedham's dramatic tract are such productions as *Craftie Cromwell* (1648)²³, *Kentish Fayre*²⁴ (1648), *New Market Fayre*²⁵ (1649), and *Shuffling, Cutting and Dealing in a Game of Piquet* (1659).²⁶ Tatham's *The Rump* (pr. 1660) was no doubt composed before the Restoration and was in all probability acted very soon after Monk had broken up Parliament early in February 1659/60. His *Scots Figgaries, or a Knot of Knaves* (1652) is an open attack on the enemies of the Royalists.

In conclusion, it may be said that friends of the theater not only composed dramatic productions specifically to fit the times, but also published old plays "written long since," which were especially applicable to conditions during the years 1642-1660, or lent themselves peculiarly to the spreading of Royalist propaganda amongst the readers who were accustomed to compare the dramatis personae and situations of drama to the persons and events of their generation. The point may be illustrated by a few examples. It is of course impossible to say to what extent the flooding of the market with reprints of old plays after the Civil War is traceable to any such motive. In 1649 William Peaps printed his *Love in its Extasie*, a kind of Royall Pastorall written long since." In his address to the reader he states that "did the Stage enjoy its former lustre, this would have lien still neglected and forgotten: but since those pastimes are denied us wherein we saw the soule and genius of all

²² Cf. *Biog. Dramatica* (1812), III, 369; Genest, I, 16.

²³ *Biog. Dramatica*, II, 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 80.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 355.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 268.

the world lye contracted in the little compasse of an English Theater, I have thought fit amidst a number of more serious pieces to venture this in publicke." "You may be confident," he continues, "there lyes no Treason in it nor State invective, (The common issues of the present age)," etc. The production, he assures the reader, is "inoffensive all, soft as the milkie dayes it was written in"; yet the absurdly extravagant manner in which the play advocates the Divine Rights of Kings is sufficient reason why he should have chosen 1649 as the year for its publication. Jasper Mayne's *The Amorous Warre*, says one edition, was "long since written." It had apparently been printed in 1648, and may have been written considerably earlier. It was reprinted in 1658 and 1659. As Ward²⁷ has noted, the conduct of Kind Archidamus probably was intended as a compliment to the conjugal virtues of Charles I; and it should also be noted that the play (V: 3) contains a disrespectful reference to "Democraticke Jhon," "Rowland," and "preaching Nol." The vicious satire of the Puritans in Thomas Randolph's *Hey for Honesty*, probably originally composed about 1642, would explain why F. J. saw fit to augment and print it in 1651. The arrest of the rogue-players and Justice Clack's insistence on detecting the satire against "Justice" in the play within the play of Brome's *Jovial Crew* is one reason why the old drama, acted originally in 1641, should have been printed in 1651. Similarly the appearance of Barbarby as a Puritan in T. B.'s *The Country Girl* would help to explain why that production was printed in 1647. Crowley's *Guardian*, first acted at Cambridge in 1641 "and several times after privately during the troubles," was printed in 1650 with an exceptionally defiant prologue and considerable satire of the Puritans. John Tatham's *The Distracted State*, written in 1641, was printed ten years later, no doubt because it is a drama with a purpose. The publication, in 1659, of Walter Montague's *The Shepheard's Paradise*—the drama that got Prynne into trouble—was evidently not entirely due to T. D.'s admiration for the author. It may be mentioned here that possibly even the setting out of the 1647 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher was due to other motives besides admiration. In his prefatory poem prefixed to the work J. M. states that the dramas of Beaumont and Fletcher never contained libels against the Church or State. May not this fact,

²⁷ *Hist. Eng. Dram. Lit.*, III, 141.

together with the dramatists' strong advocacy of the divine rights of kings, help to explain why in 1647 a group of Royalists eager to do their bit should have put before the public the complete works of these "high-flying, passive-obedient Tories"?

Other instances of the sort of thing discussed above could be cited, but these are sufficient for the purpose of illustration. And the evidence already presented is, I believe, sufficient to show that the lovers of drama, with a doggedness characteristic of their race, never gave up the struggle against "the tyranny of zeal." In one sense of the word, D'Avenant was by no means the only "Atlas to the fainting stage"

III

In spite of the fact that such recent scholars as Whibley²⁸ and Nettleton²⁹ have pointed out that Jeremy Collier was addressing a "public inured to his argument," we are still being assured that the author of *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* struck the first blow against the indecency of the Restoration theater.³⁰ Whibley and Nettleton have called attention to various protests against the immorality of the stage: John Evelyn's various comments, Robert Wolseley's preface to *Valentinian* (1685), Sir Richard Blackmore's discussions in his *Essays* and his preface to *Prince Arthur*, and Joseph Wright's extended criticism in the *Country Conversations* (1694). That Collier's contemporaries also realized that he was doing no new thing in attacking the evil tendency of the drama is shown by the remarks of one who lent his aid to Collier. In a reply to an assertion in *The Defence of Dramatick Poetry* (1698) to the effect that Collier's book was the "first Pulpit or Press-Sermon on that Text," the author of *The Stage Condemn'd* (1698) proceeds to refute the charge by quoting Wesley's Reformation Sermon, preached in St. James Church, Westminster, and afterwards at St. Bride's. Wesley, he says, is "none of the most contemptible of our Poets, himself, and is no enemy to the Stage, but only aims at its Reformation. Yet its plaine, his Charge is as heavy against the English Stage, as that of Mr. Collier: though he is for making use of the Pruning Hook and not of the Ax" (pp. 76-79). On page 90 he quotes a half

²⁸ *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.*, VIII, 185-86.

²⁹ *Eng. Drama of Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, 141-42.

³⁰ Cf., for example, Watt's *Theatrical Bristol* (1915), p. 18.

page from chapter XIX of Dr. Thomas Bray's *Short Discourse upon the Doctrines of our Baptismal Covenant* (1697), in which Christians are warned against breaking their "Baptismal Vow and Covenant" by attending plays. On pages 91-94 he quotes from Sir Richard Blackmore's preface to *Prince Arthur*; and on page 79 quotes the passage against drama in the 1690 edition of Dr. Horneck's *Sirenes, or Delight and Judgement*.

As a matter of fact, there is every reason to believe that just as the lovers of the stage kept up the fight for the drama during the years of the Commonwealth, so the Puritan element continued the fight after the Restoration. If this was not the case, what especial motive was there for publishing in 1662, and again in 1670, Sir Richard Baker's *Theatrum Redivivum*, an extremely effective reply, composed before ³¹ 1642, to the Puritan arguments? Or what especial point would there have been in 1690 to D'Urfey's having the Puritan visit the playhouse in the fourth canto of his burlesque poem *Collin's Walk through London and Westminster*? Again, unless protests against the drama were being made, what would explain the tone of Dryden's preface to his *Tyrannic Love* ³² (1669) and his allusions to the "holy critics" who had accused him of "profaneness and irreligion"? Or unless certain people were still moralizing about the accidental destruction of playhouses, as they had moralized about the burning of the Globe or the catastrophes at Paris Garden and Witny, why should Dryden have inserted the following lines in his prologue "Spoken the First Day of the King's House Acting after the Fire":

"You cherished it, and now its fall you mourn,
Which blind unmannered zealots make their scorn,
Who think that fire a judgment on the stage,
Which spared not temples in its furious rage."

At any rate, there is extant at least one severe stricture on the drama published very soon after the Restoration, a passage which, on account of its rarity and nature, deserves quotation. In his *Essays and Characters* (1661), L. G., as John Stephens ³³ and the au-

³¹ Cf. *Mod. Lang. Review*, July, 1915, pp. 377-78.

³² For other prefaces showing that the morality of Restoration Drama was being attacked see Bernbaum's *Drama of Sensibility*, p. 80, note 2.

³³ Note I. Cocke's reply to the "detractor," printed in the 1631 edition of Stephens' essays and characters together with Stephens' explanation

thor of *The Rich Cabinet* had done before him, wrote a not very complimentary character of "A Player." An actor, says L. G., "is an Artificial fool, that gets his living by making himself ridiculous; he hath lickt up the Vomit of some drunken Poet & (like a jugler) casts it up again before a thousand Spectators. He is the ignorant mans Wonder, the rich mans Jester, and the Devils Factor, that by a strange delusion sends men laughing to hell.

"Yet I confess that Comedies (if not prophane nor lascivicious), may be sometimes lawful recreations for great Persons, whose melancholy heads are daily troubled with weightie Affaires; But unto incontinent Youth (those Martyrs of Lust, and uncleanness), they are but as Oyle to their flames, and as bags of gun-powder tied under their Armes.

"Hence it was that Heroic *Sidney* upon his Death-bed condemned that rare Monument of his matchless wit, his *Arcadia* to be burned, fearing perhaps least it should burn others: *Romances* and *Plays*, are dangerous Edge-Tooles, which unwarie Readers must not meddle with: They are hot burning Irons, which Chaste Ladies like the Empresse *Kunnigund* may safely handle without hurt, whilst other goe away with burned—and seared consciences." (pp. 54-56).

It is a well-known fact that others besides the Puritan element resented the corrupt nature of the Restoration stage. Evelyn gave up going to the theater on this account. Chief Justice Hale, who in his younger days had been an enthusiastic play-goer, gave up the practice and wrote to his son to "go not to stage-plays" as a means of recreation.³⁴ In 1670 Richard Flecknoe, who in his *Loves Dominion* (1654) had lamented the immorality of the stage and had sought to remedy it, published the following bitter denunciation in his epigram "In your scurrilous and obscene Dramatick Poets":

"Shame and disgrace o' th' Actors and the Age,
Poet more fit for th' Brothel than the Stage!
Who makes thy Muse a Strumpet, and she thee
Bawd to her lust, and so you well agree."³⁵

that his original production was not intended to insult the respectable actor, but was directed only at the "common" player.

³⁴ Cf. Owen's *The Conduct of the Stage* (1721), p. 27.

³⁵ Quoted by Anton Lohr (*Richard Flecknoe*, p. 98) from *Epigrams of all Sorts* (1670).

In another epigram in the same collection he bids farewell to the stage, giving as his reason for doing so the corruption of the theater; and in 1673 he published an essay "Of Poetry and its Abuse," in which he describes the obscenity of the time in no gentle language.³⁶

In giving his satirical recipe for the making of drama, Tutor in Arrowsmith's *Reformation, A Comedy* (1673) advises his listeners, provided they wish to please the gallants especially, to "reflect upon religion and the Clergy."³⁷

In 1672 Richard Tuke, apparently with some such motive as prompted Flecknoe to print his *Love's Dominion* as a "pattern for the Reformed Stage," published his morality play *The Divine Comedian Or the Right Use of Plays*, or, as the title-page of the first edition reads, *The Souls Warfare Comically digested into Scenes, Acted betweene the Soul and her Enemies, Wherein She cometh off Victrix with an Angelical Plaudit*. Perhaps worth mentioning here is William John's "moral interlude" *The Traytor to Himself; or, Man's Heart his Greatest Enemy* (1678), a production written to be presented by school boys and with no female characters, because the writer did not consider it proper for boys to act such parts.³⁸ Other objections to the immorality of the stage which precede Collier's attack are Bishop Tillotson's frequently quoted³⁹ words, Langbaine's protest against the scurrility of Thomas Duffet's *Mock Tempest* and *Psyche Debauch'd*⁴⁰ and Robert Gould's *The Play-house* (1689). Gould's poem is not only an attack on Dryden, Shadwell, and others, but is a bitter denunciation of the corrupt state of the theater—a Gosson-like account of the vice practiced by gallants and whores, actors and actresses. Various passages similar to those cited above are no doubt familiar to students who are intimately acquainted with the literature of the Restoration.

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³⁶ Lohr, p. 103.

³⁷ Quoted by Chase in *Eng. Heroic Play*, pp. 229-30.

³⁸ Cf. Langbaine, *Account Eng. Dram. Poets*, p. 553; *Biog. Dramatica*, III, 349.

³⁹ Cf. for example, *Some Thoughts concerning the Stage in a Letter to a Lady* (1704), p. 9; Dr. Owen's *Conduct of Stage Consider'd* (1721), p. 28.

⁴⁰ *Account Eng. Dram. Poets* (1691), pp. 177-178.